

Once there was an ancient Egyptian who got sick and tired of conveying his thoughts to other people and to posterity by chipping hieroglyphs on stone. So, he cast about for a handier way of doing it. The result was a dried mish-mash of papyrus reeds that he could write on, carry around, file in a handy box and even send to other people to look at. The reed he used has given its name to what we call "paper."

That Egyptian scored one of the great breakthroughs of history. But little did he know, nor could he have known as he contemplated his handiwork, that in common with so many other great inventions his new product would prove not only a blessing but also a bane to humanity.

The blessing that paper has bestowed must be accounted greater than the bane. (Newsprint, for instance.) But the bane remains, in the form of office "paperwork." And, according to Everett S. Calhoun, of Standford Business Institute, in a article prepared for the Business Equipment Manufacturers Association, this country spends \$4 billion annually just to maintain its files. What is more, Mr. Calhoun estimates that 50 million file drawers currently are in use, not including dead storage; also that it costs about \$75 a file drawer annually to maintain current office files.

Statistics like these came as no special shock to Washingtonians. It has been well known for years that the Capital is in danger of being utterly crushed by the sheer weight of paperwork involved in the conduct of government. The Hoover Commission estimated eight years ago, for instance, that government paperwork could reach the moon 13 times over.

There can be no panacea in dealing with such a problem. But obviously a start must be made somewhere.

Perhaps one good way to start would be for each of us to think twice before he commits anything to paper; then, having committed it, to ponder even more deeply the eventual consequences of filing it.

With Asphalt?